DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 263 EA 019 604

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TITLE Bridging the Gap between a Public School System and a University: The Texas Tech University/Lubbock Independent School District Adopt a Classroom Project.
PUB DATE 13 Feb 87
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Washington, DC, February 12-15, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College School Cooperation; *Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Minority Groups; Professional Recognition; *Student Recruitment; *Teacher Exchange Programs; Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS Lubbock Independent School District TX; *Partnerships; *Texas; Texas Tech University

ABSTRACT

Based on the need for mutual cooperation to achieve common goals, partnerships between public schools and colleges are being established throughout the United States. In communities with successful partnerships, educational programs are being enhanced; education itself is seen as a continuum from preschool through college and recognized as a joint responsibility of both institutions. Recruiting high school students into higher education often becomes a secondary benefit for the colleges involved. After summarizing five principles underlying successful collaborative ventures, this paper describes an "Adopt a Classroom" project linking Texas Tech University (TTU) and Lubbock Independent School District (LISD). The project plans to make Texas Tech faculty members available to individual teachers and classrooms in LISD during the 1986-87 academic year. Each faculty member has been matched with an appropriate LISD teacher and will (1) serve as a general classroom resource, exchange teacher, and role model; (2) help high school students make the transition to college; (3) recruit students to TTU; and (4) develop other suitable activities. One added benefit may be recruitment of minority students. As students interact regularly with engineers, scientists, lawyers, artists, philosophers, and others, new interests are bound to be stimulated. Both university and school faculty will receive appropriate recognition for their contribution to the program. (MLH)

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BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN A PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AND A UNIVERSITY: THE TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY/ LUBBOCK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT ADOPT A CLASSROOM PROJECT

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Paper Presented
at the

Annual Meeting of the American Association
of Colleges for Teacher Education

Washington, D.C.
February 13, 1987

EA 019 604

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Introduction

Partnerships between public schools and colleges are being established throughout the country and are rooted in the belief that the two institutions need each other to achieve the goals that they hold in common. In communities where these partnerships have operated successfully, colleges have recognized that by making their human resources available to the public schools, the educational programs were enhanced. Education in these communities is, in fact, considered on a continuum from preschool through college and is recognized as a joint responsibility of both institutions.

The nature of a collaborative relationship depends on what the cooperating parties hope to achieve. The goal of improving the way children learn in school, which should be the heart of school-college collaboration, necessarily involves the entire continuum of connecting relationships. Formal relationships often serve to coordinate and focus informal partnerships. The reverse is also true: relationships that begin formally can become informal and develop into meaningful partnerships.

The Need for Collaboration

Today one of every two high school graduates goes directly into some form of higher education. Therefore, a closer relationship between the two levels of education is urgently required. The schools are the foundation of education. If students aren't prepared in the first

twelve years there is no prospect that they can be effective when they move to college. It is imperative that colleges work closely with schools to strengthen the curriculum K-12 rather than have colleges accept what they get and then criticize the schools for sending them students who are ill prepared (Ishler, 1983). Cooperation among colleges and schools is absolutely urgent and can be mutually beneficial.

While recruitment of high school students into higher education is not usually the primary purpose of collaborative projects, it often becomes a secondary benefit for the colleges involved. Frequently, students who never intended to go to college become fascinated in a particular subject simply by observing a professor's work in that field. Opportunities are provided through collaborative projects for students to see and work with role models in practically every profession and, as a result, interest may be sparked in careers that students had never even considered.

Principles for Making Collaborative Projects Work

There are numerous examples of schools and colleges working together. The principles that are important in making these cooperative projects work, according to the Carnegie Foundation, (Maeroff, 1983, pp. 3-4), include:

1. Educators at both levels must agree that they do indeed have common problems.
2. The traditional academic pecking order must be overcome.
3. If collaboration is to succeed, the projects it fosters must be sharply focused.

4. Those who participate in collaborative activities must get recognition and rewards.
5. Collaboration must focus on action, not machinery.

The TTU/LISD Project

In February 1986 the Commissioner of the Coordinating Board of the Texas College and University System and the Commissioner of the Texas Education Agency co-sponsored a conference designed to spark interest in the development of collaborative relationships between the public schools and colleges and universities in the state. Each of the 67 institutions in Texas that prepare teachers was invited by the Commissioners to send a team to the conference. Teams were to be comprised of the president, academic vice-president, dean of arts and sciences, dean of education, and one or more superintendents. The team from Texas Tech University was comprised of all of these individuals. Each team was charged with the responsibility of developing a collaborative project that would result in a partnership arrangement between a public school system and the college or university.

The Texas Tech University/Lubbock Independent School District team developed a collaborative project titled "Bridging the Gap Between a Public School System and a University: The TTU/LISD Adopt A Classroom Project." This project which has the enthusiastic support of the Texas Tech president and the LISD superintendent was designed to make Texas Tech faculty members available to individual teachers and classrooms in LISD during the 1986-1987 academic year as resources to enhance the educational programs in those classrooms.

The president of Texas Tech University sent a letter to all faculty members inviting them to participate in this project and to share their expertise with the students in the Lubbock schools. One hundred and forty-one (141) TTU faculty members responded to the president's invitation. Faculty from each of TTU's two schools and seven colleges have agreed to participate. The president was the first to volunteer for the program, but several other deans and administrators have also agreed to serve.

Each faculty member has been matched with an appropriate LISD teacher and they will work together throughout the 1986-1987 school year. Activities will be varied, but as a general rule, each professor will be available once a week to:

a. Serve as a general resource to the classroom;
b. Serve as an exchange teacher while the classroom teacher makes guest appearances in the professor's undergraduate classes;
c. Serve as a role model and mentor for LISD students who may be considering entering the profession that the professor represents;
d. Help high school students make the transition to college;
e. Recruit students to Texas Tech University; and
f. Develop any other appropriate cooperative activities with the classroom teacher.

Numerous Texas Tech University faculty members who volunteered for the project stated that they did so in an effort to recruit more students, particularly minorities, into their programs. There is a

tremendous disparity between the percentage of minority students in the Lubbock schools and the percentage of Black and Hispanic students at Texas Tech University. Therefore, while recruitment was not the number one goal of the organizers of the Adopt A Classroom project, it has become the primary personal objective of some of the participants.

Recruiting, of course, will become an automatic benefit of having 141 Texas Tech University faculty members visible in the Lubbock schools on a weekly basis. As elementary and secondary students interact on a regular basis with engineers, scientists, lawyers, teacher educators, artists, musicians, philosophers, etc., new interests are bound to be stimulated. Role models will be available to students and they will be introduced to professions that they did not even know existed. Each faculty member, then, will become an unofficial recruiter for Texas Tech University by virtue of simply being there and being available to answer questions about his or her profession that inquisitive elementary and secondary students will have.

Texas Tech University faculty members who participate in this program have been officially designated by the president as "Education Associates." The university will recognize participation in the Adopt A Classroom project as an important service function for purposes of promotion, tenure, and merit pay. Teachers from LISD who participate will be awarded appropriate credit for advanced academic training for the career ladder. A recognition dinner will be co-sponsored by TTU

and LISD at the conclusion of the first year of the program. At that time certificates will be awarded to each participant and an evaluation of the program will be conducted.

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